

All-Party Parliamentary Group on
POPULATION, DEVELOPMENT AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Hon. Joint Chairs: Baroness Dr Jenny Tonge and Pauline Latham MP
Hon Vice-Chairs: Lord Patel, Baroness Hussein-Ece and Holly Lynch MP
Hon Secretaries: Baroness Flather and Baroness Uddin
Hon Treasurers: Baroness Jenkin and Baroness Sheehan

The Rt. Honourable Theresa May, MP
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

11th July 2018

Dear *Theresa,*

As the Chair of the UK APPG on Population, Development and Reproductive Health (APPG on PDRH), I am writing to you on World Population Day in celebration of 50 years of global consensus that family planning is not only a human right but is now recognized by all international organizations including the World Bank to be the cheapest and simplest intervention which we can make to improve the economies of developing countries. We therefore ask you to raise the importance of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and US support for its programming during President Trump's visit to the UK this week.

As the APPG on PDRH we are proud that the UK continues to play a leading global role as a champion for the SRHR of girls and women. The power of this leadership was made clear at the 2017 London Family Planning Summit, as a moment that galvanized political momentum towards FP2020 goals and beyond.

The UK remains one of the largest donors to SRH and family planning worldwide, and is a significant voice for a comprehensive approach to SRHR, including access to safe abortion, in international fora such as the International Conference on Population and Development and the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

It is critical when you meet with President Trump that you use the UK's global leadership on SRHR to highlight the harmful impact of the Mexico City Policy or Global Gag rule (GGR) on women worldwide. As you are aware, under the policy, healthcare providers who accept funding affected by the GGR are prohibited from discussing, referring or providing abortion services- including in countries where abortion is legal and even when women specifically ask for information about all their health choices. This advice can be closely linked to the provision of family planning advice and given by the same people in the same clinics which in many communities are the most effective —and sometimes the only—providers that women and communities have access to for their health care.

Evidence and experience shows that the Global Gag Rule has devastating and far-reaching impact on women and adolescents, families, communities and health systems. The policy has had tragic effects on the health and lives of poor women, their families and whole communities – harms that have extended far beyond access to safe abortion. When the policy was implemented in 2001-2009, health clinics were forced to reduce services, lay off critical healthcare staff or close altogether in 20 countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. (Engender Health, 2017). Evidence shows that restrictions imposed by the policy reduced access to contraception and other critical reproductive health services, leading to more

unwanted and high-risk pregnancies, unsafe abortions and maternal illness, injury and death.

The US government has played a critical role in funding SRH globally including voluntary family planning and maternal and new-born health care. This is a global leadership role and a legacy of which the US should be proud and aim to sustain.

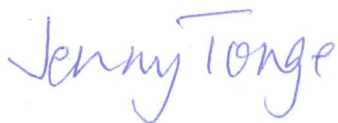
In addition we ask that you urge President Trump to restore and maintain vital funding for UNFPA, currently withheld under the Kemp-Kasten amendment, preventing critical work by the leading UN agency coordinating provision of healthcare for women and SRHR in some of the poorest and disaster affected countries worldwide. US government funding withheld for UNFPA in FY2018 was expected to total \$32.5 million in core support and potentially millions more for other project activities. Together, the impact of US policies GGR and Kemp-Kasten have huge implications for the lives and well-being of women and their children globally.

As set out in the new DFID Strategic Vision for Gender Equality, while there have been gains in the global context for girls and women, they are slow and fragile leaving huge numbers of marginalized girls and women behind. Comprehensive SRHR are key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Restrictions on health funding will result in easily preventable maternal deaths, cuts in services linked to new-born, infant and child health and decrease access to modern contraceptive methods.

We urge you to use your position as a global leader for SRHR in bilateral conversations with partner governments to advocate on behalf of the rights of girls and women. President Trump's visit to the UK this week is an opportunity to demonstrate the leadership and commitment of a Global Britain to SRHR, and to the impact of current funding gaps on SRHR.

We call on you, and the UK Government, to stand up strongly in support of SRHR, and support civil society groups, women's rights organizations and human rights defenders working to advance SRHR.

Yours truly,



Baroness Tonge

Dr Jenny Tonge

Chair, UK APPG on PDRH

CC: Rt Hon. Jeremy Hunt MP, SS for FCO and Rt. Hon, Penny Mordaunt MP, SS for ID